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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 006328

SIPDIS

FOR WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/05/2015

TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: SARG POLICIES AND ACTIONS IN CUBA: TITLE III OF
THE LIBERTAD ACT

REF: SECSTATE 207359

Classified By: CDA: Stephen Seche for Reasons 1.5 b/d

1. (U) Reftel requested information regarding the SARG's trading relationship with and investments in Cuba. The SARG signed a commercial agreement in October 1998 with the Government of Cuba that calls for increased bilateral economic cooperation. The agreement, which was ratified and implemented in 2001, does not include details on preferential trade measures or tariff reductions. Despite the countries' bilateral economic ties, little commerce or investment takes place between the two countries as a result of geographic distance and substantial transport costs.

2. (C) In November 2005, a delegation headed by Economy and Trade Minister Amer Lutfi traveled to Cuba as part of a trip to Central and South America. According to the Syrian press, during his meeting with Cuban Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration Marta Lomas, the parties discussed revitalizing bilateral exchanges, as well as increasing their commercial and political links. A post contact at the Syrian Ministry of Economy and Trade also indicated that the ministers explored the possibility of creating a Cuban-Syrian Business Council to further the countries' trade relationship, and signed a protocol agreement confirming the need for such a council.

3. (U) Post is unaware of any policies and actions taken by the SARG to advance democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms in Cuba.
SECHE